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The Philosophy of Right

In the second paragraph of his [Preface to the Philosophy of Right](#) (attached; PDF download linked below) Hegel wrote:

“A compendium proper, like a science, has its subject-matter accurately laid out ... its chief task is to arrange the essential phases of its material.”

This much can apply to our “[Communist University](#)”, in relation to this course on Hegel, and to the other 15 courses (see above for the full “compendium”).

But Hegel wants to emphasise where his own compendium becomes an exception to the general rule, so in the next paragraph he says:

*“This treatise differs from the ordinary compendium mainly in its method of procedure. It must be understood at the outset that **the philosophic way of advancing from one matter to another**, the general **speculative** method, which is the only kind of scientific proof available in philosophy, is essentially different from every other... True, the logical rules, such as those of definition, classification, and inference are now generally recognised to be **inadequate for speculative science**. Perhaps it is nearer the mark to say that the inadequacy of the rules has been felt rather than recognised, because they have been counted as mere fetters, and thrown aside to make room for free speech from the heart, fancy and random intuition... In my Science of Logic I have developed the nature of speculative science in detail.”*

Hegel says that he is now going to apply this new kind of Logic in his new book on the Philosophy of Right, of which this document is the Preface.

Is it the Philosophy of Right and Wrong? Or is it the Philosophy of Rights, as in “Human Rights”? You be the judge.

When reading Marx's Capital, we too are apt, like Hegel's contemporaries, to *"fall back upon the old-fashioned method of inference and formal reasoning"*, i.e. the pre-Hegel method. Whereas Marx is using the Hegel method, so that if we are not aware, then we may be seriously baffled by some of what Marx is arguing as he *"advances from one thing to another"*.

This is why we study Hegel in the first place: so as the better to understand Marx.

The linked document of Hegel's is readable and full of good things to discuss. Therefore it can stand as a discussion text without more elaboration.

But one thing that we can usefully say at this moment is that Hegel is clearly investigating, as a philosopher, how it is that people's minds become made up about things, both as individuals and as society, and how it is that minds are later changed again. This is how politics is done. Hegel's work is of direct, practical interest to political people.

"The ingenuous mind adheres with simple conviction to the truth which is publicly acknowledged. On this foundation it builds its conduct and way of life. In opposition to this naive view of things rises the supposed difficulty of detecting amidst the endless differences of opinion anything of universal application."

In the next instalment of this part we will take one more of Andy Blunden's lectures, and in the next part, take the

remaining three of Andy's lectures, for what is in them that can help us with Marx.

In the final two parts we will look at other commentaries and relevant texts, including from Evald Ilyenkov, Vladimir Ilyich Lenin, and Ron Press.

- The above is to introduce the original reading-text: [Preface to the Philosophy of Right, 1820, Hegel.](#)
- To download any of the CU courses in PDF files [please click here.](#)